

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for managing work orders using priorities, comprising:
  - a work-order entry computer for entering a plurality of work-orders;
  - a database management system coupled to the work-order entry computer for storing work-order information related to the plurality of work orders;
  - a work order management computer;
  - a time estimation process executing on the work order management computer for assigning a time estimate to each work order entered , the time estimate corresponding to the time estimated to be required to complete the work order;
  - a priority assigning process executing on the work order management computer which a user can use to assign a priority to at least one of the plurality of entered work orders, and which allocates each engineer a pre-determined number of priorities for a pre-determined number of priority levels; and
  - a graphical user interface executing on the work order management computer in which a user can update at least a portion of the work-order information stored in the database management system.
2. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the priority assigning processes tracks priority usage for each engineer that assigns a priority to a work order.
3. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the user can use the graphical user interface to request a report containing at least a portion of the work-order information stored in the database management system.

4. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the graphical user interface includes a SCHEDULE window which a user can use to enter a search to extract at least a portion of the work order information stored in the database management system.
5. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the graphical user interface is a web browser.
6. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the work-order information is updated periodically.
7. The system recited in claim 6, wherein the work-order information is updated once a day.
8. A method for managing work order scheduling using priorities, comprising:
  - entering a work-order;
  - storing work-order information related to the work order;
  - assigning a time estimate to each work order entered, the time estimate corresponding to the time estimated to be required to complete the work order;
  - assigning a priority to at least one of the plurality of entered work orders;
  - allocating each engineer a pre-determined number of priorities for a pre-determined number of priority levels; and
  - providing a graphical user in which a user can update at least a portion of the work-order information stored in the database management system.
9. The method recited in claim 8, comprising the step of tracking priority usage for each engineer that assigns a priority to a work order.
10. The method recited in claim 8, further comprising the step of requesting a report containing at least a portion of the work-order information stored in the database management system via the graphical user interface.

11. The method recited in claim 8, further comprising the step of extracting at least a portion of the work-order information using a SCHEDULE window of the graphical user interface.

12. The method recited in claim 8, further comprising the step of updating the work-order information periodically.

13. The method recited in claim 12, further comprising the step of updating the work-order information once a day.

14. A system for priority-based work order scheduling, comprising:

a work order entry computer to input a work order, the work order entry computer determining a time estimate of the time required to complete the work order;

a database management system to store work order data corresponding to the work order and corresponding time estimate;

a user computer executing a graphical user interface by which a user can assign a priority to the work order data, the user computer determining that the user has sufficient priority available to make the priority assignment, wherein the user computer allocates a predetermined number of priorities for a predetermined number of priority levels to the user, and tracks the user's priority assignments.

15. The system recited in claim 14, wherein the graphical user interface provides a display by which the user can query the database management system to extract a portion of the work order data in a report.

16. The system recited in claim 14, wherein the user computer decrements the number of priorities corresponding to the level of the priority that the user assigns to the work order data when the user makes the priority assignment, and increments number of priorities corresponding

to the level of the priority that the user assigns to the work order data when the work order is completed.

17. The system recited in claim 15, wherein the report is a priority report showing the user's use of priorities.

18. A method for priority-based work order scheduling, comprising the steps of:

entering a work order;

determining a time estimate of the time required to complete the work order;

storing work order data corresponding to the work order and corresponding time estimate;

assigning a priority to the work order data;

allocating a predetermined number of priorities for a predetermined number of priority levels to the user; and

determining whether there is sufficient priority available to make the priority assignment.

19. The method recited in claim 18, further comprising the step of querying the database management system to extract a portion of the work order data in a report.

20. The method recited in claim 18, further comprising the step of tracking the user's priority assignments.

21. The method recited in claim 20, further comprising the steps of:

decrementing the number of priorities corresponding to the level of the priority that the user assigns to the work order data when the user makes the priority assignment; and

incrementing number of priorities corresponding to the level of the priority that the user assigns to the work order data when the work order is completed.

22. The system recited in claim 19, further comprising the step of generating a report showing the user's use of priorities.
23. A system for priority-based scheduling of telephone company work orders, comprising:
- means for entering a work order;
  - means for estimating a time to complete the work order;
  - means for storing work order data associated with the work order and time estimate to complete the work order;
  - means for associating a priority with the work order, and storing the associated priority with the work order data.
24. The system recited in claim 23, further comprising means for tracking the time remaining to complete the work order on a continuing basis.
25. The system recited in claim 24, wherein the means for tracking comprises means for periodically updating the work order data.
26. The system recited in claim 23, further comprising means for allocating a pre-determined number of priorities for a pre-determined number of priority levels.
27. The system recited in claim 26, further comprising means for tracking the allocation to determine if a particular priority can be assigned.
28. The system recited in claim 23, further comprising:
- means for determining a series of tasks required to complete the work order;
  - means for assigning a time required to complete each task; and
  - means for summing the time required to complete each task to estimate the time required to complete the work order.